

Executive Summary

State Unified Plan

**submitted under
Section 501 of the
Workforce Investment Act of 1998**

State of Arkansas

**for the period of
July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2005**

PREFACE

The State of Arkansas State Unified Plan to be submitted under Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 for the period of July 1, 2000 - June 30, 2005 was delivered for approval to the U.S. Department of Labor on March 28, 2000, by publishing the plan on the World Wide Web at the following Web address: www.state.ar.us/workforce. This delivery method was in accordance with instructions in the Workforce Investment Act Final Unified Training Guidance, published in the January 14, 2000, issue of the Federal Register, Section E, Electronic Option 1.

The Executive Summary of Arkansas' State Unified Plan for the Workforce Investment Act is an overview of the plan. With attachments, the State Unified Plans is 731 pages in length and weighs more than seven pounds. The table of contents of the full plan as published on the Web is included at the end of the summary.

Comments on the State Unified Plan must be made in writing to the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, Dr. Linda L. Beene, Executive Director, 320 Executive Court, Suite 302, Little Rock, AR 72205. Comments may be submitted by mail to the above address, by facsimile to (501) 371-1030, or by e-mail to arkansaswib@mail.state.ar.us. Comments should refer to the State Unified Plan as published on the Web. Comments and suggestions for improvement should cite specific sections and attachments of the full plan by page and line numbers.

A copy of the State Unified Plan is available for viewing at the above address during normal business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Executive Summary

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BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), signed by President Bill Clinton on August 7, 1998, provides the framework for states to create a more comprehensive, customer-focused workforce investment system. Title I of the federal Workforce Investment Act authorizes a variety of employment and training programs that supersede the Job Training Partnership Act. Title II contains the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. Title III amends the Wagner-Peyser Act to require that Employment Service/Job Service activities become part of the One-Stop system. Title IV includes the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Title V contains the authority for the State Unified Plan and other provisions. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Act of 1998 (Perkins III) also has a major impact on the nation's educational and workforce investment systems. States may include Perkins III in the unified plan, and Arkansas has chosen to do this. Perkins III supports reforms and improvement activities in vocational and technical education to improve student achievement and preparation for postsecondary education, further learning, and careers. Implementation of these acts requires collaboration at the federal, state, and local levels to create this new comprehensive, customer-focused workforce investment system.

Arkansas started this process last year when Governor Mike Huckabee and members of the Arkansas General Assembly created and passed legislation outlining a workforce development plan for Arkansas that would greatly expand the scope and impact of the federal legislation. Governor Huckabee signed Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Act, on April 6, 1999, thereby providing the process which links employers and job seekers through a statewide workforce training delivery system.

The establishment of a One-Stop delivery system for workforce development services is a cornerstone of the reforms contained in Title I of the Workforce Investment Act. This system provides customers a single point of contact for employment, training, education, and supportive services. Under the oversight of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, One-Stop Centers in communities throughout the state will integrate multiple workforce development programs and resources and make them available to individuals at the "street level" through a user-friendly delivery system. This system will simplify and expand access to services for job seekers and employers, eliminating the need to visit different locations. The local one-stop service centers, designed by employers for employers, will help find and train qualified workers and help qualified workers find jobs in business and industry. The idea is to simplify the maze of current programs into a comprehensive, aligned system of services for job seekers and employers, eliminating the need to visit different locations.

A significant key to the success of the Arkansas One-Stop System will be its "no wrong door" approach to providing services that encompass the principles of universal access, integration, co-

location, collaboration, and performance as the building blocks to the system. With the “no wrong door” philosophy, when a customer approaches any One-Stop partner requesting assistance with employment and training needs or services in support of employment and training, the customer will be electronically referred to all other One-Stop partners.

The system is designed to be market-driven, comprehensive, and portable. Employers will determine the skills they need in their workplaces, establish industry standards for training, choose the best trainers, and hold the system accountable for meeting performance standards. Progress toward complete WIA implementation is ongoing. A crucial element in this process is the continued involvement of business, industry, and community leaders. The workforce development process depends heavily upon the vision and leadership of our state’s employers. Executive Director, Dr. Linda L. Beene, includes these business involvement to guide the success of the Arkansas One-Stop System, including suggestions that:

- ?? Strong business leaders are nominated for local board membership,
- ?? Workplace needs are defined,
- ?? Fellow employers are encouraged to support the new workforce investment system, and
- ?? County judges and mayors are informed of local and regional workforce and training needs so that the system will be more responsive to the needs of business.

The one-stop service centers will bring about the consolidation of most federal, state, and local workforce programs, giving employers and workers a chance to connect in real or virtual communities, find out about the labor market, and access education and training. Funds are tied to results, and job candidates can select the best industry-recognized training or education programs.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board staff, under the direction of Dr. Beene, has been providing guidance and technical assistance to regional and local areas as they select board members and formulate plans for implementation of both the federal and state acts. The key principles of the federal and state acts are streamlining services, empowering individuals, universal access, increased accountability, integrated and coordinated services, state and local flexibility, and improved youth programs. The new workforce investment system is designed to increase the employment, retention, occupational skill levels, and earnings of Arkansas' workers through universal access to career management tools and high quality service while creating a better-trained, more competitive workforce for Arkansas' employers. As a result, these systems will improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the State of Arkansas. The vision is to establish a globally recognized workforce in Arkansas, educated, trained, skilled with the character and work ethic needed to excel in a changing economy.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN ARKANSAS STATE UNIFIED PLAN

In accordance with Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the following programs are included in the Arkansas State Unified Plan:

- ?? **Secondary vocational education programs (Perkins III/Secondary)** (*Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)*)
- ?? **Postsecondary vocational education programs (Perkins III/Postsecondary)** (*Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)*)
- ?? **Activities authorized under Title I, Workforce Investment Systems (Workforce Investment Activities for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth, or WIA Title I, and the Wagner-Peyser Act)** (*Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (29 U.S.C. 2801 et seq.)*)
- ?? **Activities authorized under Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy (Adult Education and Family Literacy Programs)** (*Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (20 U.S.C. 9201 et seq.)*)
- ?? **Food Stamp Employment and Training Program, or FSET** (*7 U.S.C. 2015(d)*)
- ?? **Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (Trade Act Programs)** (*19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.*)
- ?? **Programs authorized under Part B of title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.), other than §112 of such Act (29 U.S.C. 732) (Vocational Rehabilitation)**
- ?? **Activities authorized under chapters 41 & 42 of Title 38, USC, and 20 CFR 1001 and 1005 (Veterans Programs, including Veterans Employment, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, and Local Veterans' Employment Representative Program)**
- ?? **Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws (Unemployment Insurance)** (*in accordance with applicable Federal law which is authorized under Title III, Title IX and Title XII of the Social Security Act and the Federal Unemployment Tax Act*)
- ?? **Programs authorized under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Welfare-to-Work (WtW))** (*42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.*)
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families**
 - Welfare-to-Work**
- ?? **Programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP))** (*42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.*)
- ?? **Programs authorized under the Community Services Block Grant Act (Community Services Block Grant, or CSBG)** (*42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.*)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Descriptions of the agencies responsible for administering programs included in the Arkansas State Unified Plan and descriptions of the programs and activities included in the plan follow. They are also available through the hyperlinks below.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE EDUCATION

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE) is under the authority and leadership of the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities. The State Board is appointed by the Governor and is charged with responsibility for overseeing and directing the work of the ADWE. The ADWE is responsible for vocational and technical education at the secondary level, the post-secondary technical institutes and vocational technical schools, adult education/General Educational Development (GED), the Federal Surplus Property Agency, the State's Veterans Approving Agency. In addition, ADWE serves as the lead state agency and fiscal agent for the Career Opportunities Initiative (the School-to-Work federal grant). Also, under the umbrella of the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities and the ADWE is the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. The Arkansas Rehabilitation Services agency is a partner in the workforce investment system, and information about this agency is included separately in the plan.

The mission of ADWE is to provide leadership and contribute resources to serve the diverse and changing workforce training needs of the youth and adults of Arkansas. The goals of the agency are as follows:

- ?? Develop a strategic plan for effective delivery of lifelong career development and workforce education
- ?? Develop a strategic marketing plan that promotes the system's ability to achieve its mission
- ?? Provide an effective communication system that is involved, informative, and interactive
- ?? Collaborate effectively both internally and externally with all stakeholders

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Education-Adult Education Section (ADWE-AES) funds 53 local adult education programs and 47 community based and/or privately operated literacy councils and special projects, such as the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center, through grants of state and federal funds. The adult education program is supported with \$4.5 million received under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and \$17.6 million in state funding.

The service delivery systems are diverse: Programs are funded through a variety of local administrative entities, including public school systems, county boards of education, community colleges, technical colleges, technical institutes, the Arkansas Department of Corrections, and the Arkansas School for the Deaf. Local programs provide adult education services, such as teaching academic skills to people who function from beginning reading through a 12.9 functioning grade level and English as a Second Language (ESL). These services are provided through classes held in locations throughout each program's service area and in programs such as family literacy, workplace, correctional institutions, and Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE). In the 1997-1998 program year, 69,537 adult Arkansans received services from programs receiving adult education funding; 3,711 of these were in ESL classes, and 5,829 were in correctional institution programs.

Adult education services are available in every county in Arkansas, delivered by certified teachers working in full time programs and by trained volunteers. Certified teachers receive staff-development on topics that include teaching adults, ESL, learning disabilities, literacy task analysis, and technology usage. Adult education services include business and industry specific workplace education programs that are based on literacy task analyses performed by trained local adult education personnel and basic educational skills classes provided at the workplace. In the 1997-1998 program year, 6,232 adults were served in workplace programs developed in partnership with employers. Arkansas GED Testing, ADWE-AES, administers the Tests of General Educational Development in Arkansas. In calendar year 1999, a total of 6,839 people successfully passed these tests and received a Arkansas High School Diploma.

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education - Adult Education Section (ADWE-AES) is to provide adult learners with the mechanisms to improve and refine their K-12 academic skills, attain the Arkansas High School Diploma, and the life skills that prepare the citizen for self-sufficiency and improvement in the quality of life. This agency collaborates with all of the participating agencies to implement the common goals of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board. In addition, the Adult Education Section has set goals in accordance with the ADWE, the Workforce Investment Act Title II, and the National Reporting System for Adult Education.

The goals of this agency include assessment activities, General Educational Development (GED) preparation, basic skills enhancement for unemployed and underemployed individuals, English as a Second Language instruction, family literacy, diagnostic assessment for learning disabilities, implementation of new performance standards in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, development and implementation of a new performance-based funding formula, and implementation of the new Adult Education Management Information System (AdEd MIS).

PERKINS III (SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY) AND TECH PREP

The Perkins funds are granted to the state by federal formula based on the population of various age groups. Generally, Arkansas receives about 1 percent of the funds authorized by Congress for Perkins. The recipients of the funds are local education agencies and postsecondary or higher education institutions offering vocational education programs of less than a baccalaureate degree. These recipients must use the funds to improve their vocational and technical education programs. In addition, a very limited amount of funds are available for services to persons in state correctional agencies or institutions that serve persons with disabilities.

Funds available under Perkins fall into two categories: the basic grant and the Tech Prep education grant. The basic grant for Arkansas in the 1999-2000 fiscal year is \$11.4 million. The basic grant funds are split into three purposes: state leadership (10 percent), state administration (5 percent), and local grants (85 percent).

The state leadership and administration funds are used by ADWE to support many activities and initiatives at the state level, including technical assistance staff, development and dissemination of curriculum and standards, a student assessment program, professional development for teachers and staff, evaluation of programs, leadership for vocational student organizations, services to students preparing for nontraditional training and employment, and services to individuals in state institutions, such as state correctional institutions and institutions that serve individuals with disabilities.

The local grant funds must be used to improve vocational and technical education programs that accomplish the following:

- ?? Strengthen the academic, vocational, and technical skills of students through the integration of academics with vocational and technical programs through a coherent sequence of courses
- ?? Provide students with a strong experience in and understanding of all aspects of the industry
- ?? Develop, improve, or expand the use of technology in vocational and technical education
- ?? Provide professional development to teachers, counselors, and administrators
- ?? Develop and implement evaluations of vocational and technical education programs
- ?? Initiate, improve, expand, and modernize quality vocational and technical education programs
- ?? Link secondary and postsecondary vocational and technical education

The Tech Prep education grant is \$1.2 million for the 1999-2000 fiscal year. Grants are provided to consortia composed of secondary and postsecondary/higher education institutions to carry out articulated vocational and technical programs that consist of at least two years of secondary

school and two years or more of postsecondary/higher education or apprenticeship. These Tech Prep programs are referred to in the state as “Tech Prep Associate Degree” programs or “2+2” programs. The Arkansas model is actually a “4+2” program that is open to students beginning in the ninth grade. The goal of the Tech Prep Associate Degree programs is to involve students by grade 11 in an articulated vocational and technical education program of studies. Those students are then transitioned into their postsecondary component, with completion of at least the associate degree, two-year certificate, or two-year apprenticeship program as the outcome.

The Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) shares responsibility for the Tech Prep education programs and jointly approves the consortia budgets each year. In addition, the ADWE has delegated responsibility for the Perkins basic grant funds that are provided to higher education institutions to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and its state board, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board. A portion of the state leadership and state administration funds are transferred to the Department of Higher Education to carry out this responsibility.

When considering the vocational and technical education programs in Arkansas as a whole, it is important to remember that Perkins III is a very small portion of the funds that are expended on these program – less than ten percent. The Perkins III funds are intended to be more of a catalyst for change and improvement rather than a support for the basic vocational and technical education programs in the state.

The congressional vision for Perkins III programs is stated in the purpose of the Act as follows:

The purpose of this Act is to develop more fully the academic, vocational, and technical skills of secondary students and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in vocational and technical education programs. This federal vision fits totally into the state vision for vocational and technical education at the secondary and postsecondary levels. All children at the secondary level and all adults at the postsecondary level should have access to high-quality, relevant vocational and technical education programs that prepare them to enter and succeed in further education and training and in their chosen career.

Many of the goals of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board relate directly to programs that are funded, in part, by Perkins III. The goal of ensuring that high school students have the basic skills needed for further education or work is one of the primary goals of Perkins III at the secondary level. Perkins funds are used to help vocational and technical teachers integrate academic skills into their programs, thereby assisting students in learning and in using academic concepts. Related to the goal of competency-based certification programs for teachers and

students, Perkins funds have for many years been used to develop and implement a student competency assessment at the secondary level that will help measure the vocational and technical skills attained by students in the programs. In addition, the postsecondary teachers in the technical institutes have access to a competency-based certification program that includes a career ladder with increased pay for achievement.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board goal of access to career planning has been promoted and encouraged at the secondary level for several years. Many local school districts have used Perkins funds to develop and implement an improved plan for career guidance and counseling that begins at the eighth grade, that provides for annual checks, and that includes the involvement of parents each year.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board vision is supported in many ways by Perkins-funded programs. That vision of Arkansans who are “educated, trained, skilled – with the character and work ethic needed to excel,” sums up the purpose of Perkins. All activities funded by Perkins are designed to improve vocational and technical education programs and ensure that the students enrolled in those programs succeed in further education/training and in their chosen field of work.

ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) is the state agency that provides vocational rehabilitation services to assist Arkansans with significant disabilities in going to work and living independently. Arkansas Act 43 of 1955, the “Vocational Rehabilitation Act of Arkansas,” established Arkansas Rehabilitation Services as the statutory state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities (with the exception of blindness, services for which are provided by DHS-Division of Services for the Blind since 1983) throughout Arkansas. The Rehabilitation Act has been authorized on a regular basis for 80 years to provide a continually improving system of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to individuals with disabilities. ARS is a State Vocational Rehabilitation program created and regulated through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, originally the Civilian Rehabilitation Act of 1920.

The mission of ARS is to provide opportunities for Arkansans with disabilities to work and to lead productive and independent lives. The term “disability” is used in many different ways. A “significant” disability is technically defined in the Rehabilitation Act, ARS’ enabling federal legislation. However, a simple definition is “a disability that interferes with a person’s ability to obtain, maintain, or regain a job.” In other words, if a disability interferes with a person’s ability to work, then it is significant from the standpoint of the vocational rehabilitation program provided by ARS.

The ARS vision is for every Arkansan with disabilities, who wishes to do so, to become employed and/or live independently. ARS customers are people with significant disabilities and employers who need qualified employees. ARS provides services, such as evaluation, counseling, vocational training, education, tools, adaptive equipment, transportation, job search, and job placement to assist people with significant disabilities to go to work.

ARS envisions the vocational rehabilitation program that it provides as an integral part of a new customer focused, comprehensive workforce investment system in Arkansas. ARS is committed as a full partner in the workforce investment system to following the principles of streamlining services, empowering individuals, universal access, increased accountability, integrated and coordinated services, State and local flexibility, and improved programs.

Another service area of ARS involves students with disabilities. Transition services are available to eligible youth and young adults with disabilities to assist in the transition from school to work. Vocational rehabilitation resources are available to consult and augment school efforts that lead towards employment and ultimately the workforce goals of the comprehensive system.

The program provided by ARS is an eligibility program, not an entitlement. A customer must meet criteria for disability established in the Rehabilitation Act in order to receive services. The services are determined by the person's unique abilities, strengths, characteristics, and informed choice. An individual plan for employment (IPE) is developed by the customer and a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor or others, and must be approved by the counselor.

Opportunities for the development of skills necessary for independent living are also made available through the vocational IPE or independent living counselors. Payment for assessing a person's eligibility for services is provided by ARS, if existing medical, psychological, and vocational information is not adequate or available.

ARS is composed of a network of components that work interactively statewide to provide quality vocational rehabilitation. Rehabilitation counselors assigned to each of the state's 75 counties serve customers through the Field Program. The Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center offers one of the most comprehensive rehabilitation programs available in the nation. Other components include the Office for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, the Rehabilitation Initial Diagnosis and Assessment for Clients diagnostic unit, the ICAN Technology Project, and the Supported Housing Project.

Further details regarding the vision, goals, programs, and the continuing role of ARS in the Arkansas workforce investment system may be found in Part II-A(10-17) of the Arkansas State Unified Plan.

ARKANSAS EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT

The Arkansas Employment Security Department's (AESD) mission is to provide its customers with employment related services that enhance the economic stability of Arkansas and its citizens. These services are provided to employers, the workforce, and the general public and include:

- ?? Linking employers with qualified job applicants
- ?? Helping the employed and unemployed find work or training
- ?? Providing unemployment insurance benefits to those eligible
- ?? Facilitating employer compliance with Arkansas Employment Security Law
- ?? Collecting unemployment insurance taxes
- ?? Producing and communicating labor market information

AESD's core strategies for achieving its mission include:

- ?? Empowering staff members to excel and make continuous improvements in customer service
- ?? Maximizing the use of appropriate new technology in delivery of services
- ?? Improving operational processing

The agency administers four major programs and a variety of smaller programs. The major programs include unemployment insurance, labor exchange (Wagner-Peyser Act, which is now under Title III of the Workforce Investment Act), job training for adults, youth, and adults (Title I of the Workforce Investment Act), and labor market information (partially covered under Title III of the Workforce Investment Act).

AESD has approximately 535 full-time employees and about 200 intermittent employees, who supplement the permanent staff when the workload is heaviest. Most of the intermittent employees work in the unemployment insurance section. There are 30 full time AESD offices around the state, some of which are a part of the Career Development Network, Arkansas' initial one-stop system. Local AESD offices traditionally handle unemployment insurance initial claims and labor exchange or job service functions. Continued claims are handled through an interactive voice response (IVR) system via telephone, and claims are paid through a staff in the central office in Little Rock. Job training programs are sub-granted to regional program operators. Labor market information programs are accomplished through the central office staff in Little Rock.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT TITLE I (YOUTH, ADULT, AND DISLOCATED WORKER)

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs are designed to be operated through the One-Stop career center system. Core services will be

provided to anyone who requests them. These are non-staff intensive services that provide information about and access to career planning and job placement resources. Individuals who are not able to obtain employment through this low intensity intervention will be eligible for intensive services, such as in-depth assessment and various workshops. If these individuals still are unable to find employment, they will be eligible for training services through area colleges, technical institutes, and other training institutions. Local workforce investment boards (LWIBs), along with the chief elected officials of the area, select One-Stop career center operators.

The vision of the Workforce Investment Act Title I programs is that adults, youth, and dislocated workers will receive the services they need through a One-Stop career center and will become or remain employed at an income level high enough to support their families. Title I programs provide a method for service providers to coordinate their resources so they may be used effectively by common customers. The programs also provide resources, through core, intensive, and training services, to assist people in becoming employed and businesses in finding prepared workers or in training eligible workers they hire.

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT

Programs under the Wagner-Peyser Act provide labor exchange services to connect employers and job seekers. Special assistance is given to veterans. Another priority group served through the Wagner-Peyser Act is unemployment insurance recipients. The Wagner-Peyser program has five goals that tie into the overall workforce development system. They are to:

- ?? Increase the number of employers listing job orders with AESD
- ?? Increase managerial, professional and technical job orders
- ?? Increase the percentage of openings filled
- ?? Measure and increase employer satisfaction on job referrals
- ?? Make available information on supportive services and training to those applicants who need such services

These goals are compatible with the One-Stop career center plans and will be achieved in conjunction with one-stop partners in each LWIB area.

VETERANS PROGRAMS

Funds are provided to AESD for staff in local offices specifically designated to provide service to veterans and, in some cases, their eligible family members. Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs), who are themselves veterans, are located in most AESD local offices to provide job counseling and in-depth assistance to veterans. Representatives of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOPs) are in some offices, based on eligible veterans' population,

to contact employers and provide additional assistance to disabled veterans who may need additional help with job preparation and job finding. Generally, these employees are disabled veterans. All Wagner-Peyser funded labor exchange services target veterans as a priority.

The vision of the Veterans Programs is that all veterans who want or need to work will be fully employed in jobs that use their skills and provide a livable wage. Goals are expressed through performance standards, described in Part K, State Unified Plan.

TRADE ACT PROGRAMS

AESD operates the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program and the North American Free Trade Act Transitional Adjustment Assistance (NAFTA/TAA) programs to assist individuals who have lost their jobs due to an increase in imports or, under NAFTA, a company moving production to Canada or Mexico. Services include job training, including tuition and fees; support services, such as books; transportation; job search and relocation assistance; and, transitional assistance allowances after unemployment insurance benefits are exhausted.

The objectives of the TAA and NAFTA/TAA programs are to help eligible individuals whose jobs have been lost due to increased imports or whose jobs have moved to Mexico or Canada gain new jobs and, if necessary, to assist them in obtaining new skills so they will qualify for new careers. This program improves the economy in that it helps provide workers for jobs that exist in Arkansas. Training may be provided only in jobs in which there is likelihood for placement. At the same time, individuals who receive training allowances are able to contribute to the economy.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

The Unemployment Insurance program's purpose is to retain a trained and experienced workforce during temporary business lulls and to provide a safety net – insurance benefit – for workers who have lost their jobs while they seek another or wait to go back to the job from which they were laid off.

The mission of the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program for workers is to provide an insurance benefit to help them with living expenses while they are temporarily unemployed. The objective is to help them until they can return to the job from which they have been laid off or to help them while they search for a new job. The goal of the program is to get people back into appropriate employment as quickly as practicable. This may involve retraining them for a new job, providing them with job search skills or, if rehire has been promised by the employer within a specific and short time period, simply sustaining them until they can return to work. The

mission of the program for employers is to maintain a trained and experienced workforce if the company has to lay off workers for a short time period.

WELFARE-TO-WORK

The Welfare-to-Work (WtW) program provides employment assistance and support for those welfare recipients who have the most barriers to employment. It is generally a “work first” program, which requires that individuals be employed and then receive training to help them stay employed and improve their work skills. Recent amendments allow for short-term training prior to job placement. The program is operated under the auspices of the local workforce investment boards.

The WtW program envisions that welfare programs will become short-term transitional programs and that all individuals who are physically and mentally able to work will earn sufficient income to support their families. Welfare recipients will be trained in the skills needed by the state’s employers in order to help the overall economy grow. The program uses the demand training system and the eligible training providers list used by Title I of WIA in order to ensure that only appropriate training is provided.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

DIVISION OF COUNTY OPERATIONS

The Division of County Operations (DCO) of the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) has responsibility for providing leadership and support for the 84 local DHS county offices in 75 counties and is responsible for administering several economic programs, including: Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA), Food Stamp, Medicaid Eligibility, and Community Services programs.

DCO also provides employment assistance and support services to enable clients to become self-sufficient. In addition, assistance is provided to Arkansans through grants to community action agencies and the distribution of surplus U.S. Department of Agriculture donated food.

FOOD STAMP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

The Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (E&T) is a program that requires able-bodied, non-exempt food stamp recipients to meet certain work-related requirements. The program is designed to assist eligible recipients in obtaining skills necessary to become self-sufficient.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG)

The Governor has designated the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, Office of Community Services (DHS/DCO/OCS) as the lead agency to be responsible for carrying out Community Services Block Grant activities in the State of Arkansas. In addition, through Act 345 of 1985, the Legislature has made the DHS/DCO/OCS responsible for carrying out all aspects of the Act.

It is the mission of OCS to be the lead agency in state government in dealing with problems of the poor. This agency is responsible for providing technical assistance to local communities and agencies in providing community services to low-income persons. OCS is also responsible for advising the Governor, Legislature and other state agencies about programs intended to provide services to low-income persons, and about policies as they affect low-income persons.

The CSBG Program provides assistance to States and local communities, working through a network of community action agencies (CAAs) and other neighborhood-based organizations, for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become fully self-sufficient.

For Community Services Block Grant funding requirements, eligible entities provided descriptions of how they plan to coordinate the provision of employment and training activities as part of the workforce investment systems under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF), TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE (TEA)

The Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) program helps economically needy families become more responsible for their own support and less dependent on public assistance. Central to this purpose is helping adults and minor parents increase their employment potential, helping to reduce out-of-wedlock births, and promoting family unity.

In addition to case management and employment related services, the TEA program provides monthly cash assistance to eligible families to help meet the family's basic needs while the parent or other adult relative works toward increasing his/her earning potential.

TEA cash assistance is also available to help meet the needs of children who are being cared for by non-parent adult relatives. Assistance to such relatives may be provided without regard to a specified time limit.

In addition to serving as a “safety net” for some of Arkansas’ most needy families, the TEA program contributes to Arkansas’ overall workforce investment system by helping the parents in those families recognize their employment possibilities. Through employability assessments, employment planning, and the provision of employment related services, the TEA program helps direct them into jobs, thus helping to reduce the family’s need for public assistance. Minor parents are encouraged and supported in completing a high school education or equivalency so that they are better prepared to enter the job market as adults. Since TEA benefits are time-limited, emphasis is placed on short-term goals so that the parent is able to enter employment before the end of his or her time limit.

In addition, the TEA program supports and encourages the formation of local community-based coalitions to address the needs of low-income families living in the community. These coalition efforts may include focusing on education and training needs of the community to increase employment opportunities available to low-income families, creating jobs, providing wage subsidies to employers to increase job opportunities, and other similar activities.

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

The DHS Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is the designated state agency serving the blind in Arkansas. The Division of Services for the Blind is committed to providing specialized, quality rehabilitation services to blind and visually impaired Arkansans, creating opportunities for individuals to achieve maximum personal and economic independence. DSB is further committed to promoting positive awareness about blindness and advocating for informed choice and equal opportunity for blind Arkansans: Changing the present to improve the future.

The Division of Services for the Blind is dedicated to the independence of Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired and is committed to the principle that these individuals have the right to make informed choices regarding where they live, where they work, how they participate in the community and how they interact with others. The mission of DSB is to work in partnership with these Arkansans by assisting them to obtain the information they need to make informed choices and by providing them with the access to services that increase their opportunities to live as they choose.

DSB operates under an Order of Selection providing service priority to the most severely disabled individuals. Within the constraints of state and federal laws and bases on the availability of funds, the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind fulfills its mission through the following goals:

?? Employment: To assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to secure or maintain employment in careers consistent with their skills, abilities, and interests

- ?? Independent Living: To assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to live as independently as possible through the development of skills, accommodations, or adaptations that are necessary to perform all activities of daily living
- ?? Prevention of Blindness: To assist in preventing blindness, stabilizing vision, and where possible, restoring vision

The Division of Services for the Blind offers a variety of services with distinct eligibility requirements based chiefly upon the severity of visual impairment and its effect upon the individual's employment opportunities and ability to function independently. If an individual cannot read standard print regardless of corrective lenses, or, the individual's visual acuity is less than 20/200 in the better eye, or the individual's useful vision is rapidly deteriorating, the individual may be eligible for DSB services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services are a comprehensive statewide program of services to assess needs and to plan, develop and provide job-related services to blind or severely visually impaired individuals. An individual with a visual disability must require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment. The eligible individual must benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the vocational rehabilitation services provided. An individual who is blind and determined by Title II or Title XVI of the Social Security Act will be considered to be an individual with a significant disability and is presumed to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. Vocational rehabilitation services are provided for achieving an employment outcome that is consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choices of the individual.

Additional services available through DSB are Rehabilitation Teaching Services, Transition Services, Vending Facility Program Services, and Radio Reading Services for the Blind.

DSB has established goals to acquire and maintain qualified rehabilitation professionals, increase job opportunities for blind and visually impaired consumers, continue to expand DSB's technology program and services, provide transition services from school to work, continue the implementation of and update the automated information system. DSB's primary goal is to provide and maintain an effective vocational rehabilitation program that meets the needs of its consumers.

DIVISION OF AGING AND ADULT SERVICES

The Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) is under the Arkansas Department of Human Services and serves as the focal point for all matters concerning older Arkansans. The Division serves as an effective and visible advocate for the aging population through its administration of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging and the Silver Haired Legislative Session. The

Division gives seniors a choice of how and where they will receive long-term care services. A Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is in place to provide state and local advocacy services to address the issues and problems faced by residents of long term care facilities. The Division of Aging and Adult Services also plans, coordinates, funds and evaluates the following programs for senior adults: Adult Day Care, Adult Protective Services, Chore Services, Client Representation, Congregate Meals, Home Delivered Meals, Employment Services, Homemaker Services, Information and Assistance, Legal Assistance, Material Aid, Personal Care Services Repair/Maintenance/Modification, Socialization, Telephone Reassurance and Transportation. The Division also offers Adults with Disabilities Medicaid Waiver Services, ElderChoices/Medicaid Services and an Independent Choices Program.

DAAS serves as the focal point for all matters concerning older Arkansans. It serves as an effective and visible advocate for older individuals, gives citizens a choice of how and where they receive long term care services. It also plans, coordinates, funds, and evaluates programs for older Arkansans.

The Division of Aging and Adult Services has established the following goals:

- ?? Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to educate the public about important aspects of aging, including financial, legal, health, lifestyle, and other issues.
- ?? Expand the continuum of care through the development of new initiatives.
- ?? Strengthen existing services administered by the Division of Aging and Adult Services.

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), authorized by Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended, is administered by the U. S. Department of Labor. The Act divides SCSEP into two large categories: programs administered by state units on aging and programs administered by Title V national contractors. The DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services is the state unit on aging in Arkansas and receives funding for SCSEP, which is distributed to Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) by a formula used to allocate a variety of other funds.

The program provides 224 half-time positions for low-income persons who are 55 and over. The salary is at least the minimum wage and includes other fringe benefits. Area Agencies on Aging place workers in host community service agencies, such as senior centers, libraries, county offices, and recreational facilities. Each participant is evaluated and an individual plan is developed. The ultimate goal is to place workers in unsubsidized positions. The annual goal is a 20 per cent placement.

SCSEP will continue to fill a specialized niche in the overall Arkansas Workforce Investment system. It will offer individualized part-time employment opportunities for low-income persons 55 and over. This specialized program for older adults meets a specific need. The Area Agencies on Aging and the Division of Aging and Adult Services will work with the components of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board to cooperate in any way possible.

The Area Agencies on Aging will have agreements of mutual understanding with the One Stops and use them as a source of job applicants and also refer older people to the One Stop facilities for assistance. Area Agencies on Aging cover up to 10 counties and have one staff member who is the SCSEP specialist. It will be difficult for them to appear frequently at the One Stop sites, but they will be connected by the mutual referral of participants.

A. VISION AND GOALS

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and establish policy for conducting employment and training activities within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers.

The vision of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board is —

A globally recognized workforce in Arkansas —educated, trained, skilled—with the character and work ethic needed to excel in a changing economy.

The mission of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board is —

To establish a unified, flexible, accountable workforce training system implemented through the collaboration of business, industry, labor and citizens, and characterized by accessible and responsive one-stop career development networks. The system will offer employers a resource for workers in existing and emerging occupations and empower Arkansans to receive employment services as well as job-specific training.

The major challenges to achieving the vision identified by the board are as follows:

- ?? Inadequate education/skill level of workforce, especially for high-tech jobs
- ?? Lack of work ethic in some workers, particularly in categories including low-waged jobs and youth entering the workforce
- ?? Insufficient coordination between employers and education/training professionals
- ?? Failure of job-seekers and employers to make optimum use of existing workforce development programs

- ?? Sometimes inefficient, ineffective, and unresponsive K-12 and non-baccalaureate education and job-training system
- ?? Lack of clear and definite communication between the K-12 system and preschool and postsecondary schools.
- ?? Lack of motivation to increase skill and education level
- ?? Lack of awareness of the availability of higher-paying jobs for people who receive increased education/training
- ?? Duplication of services and programs, which creates an inefficient system
- ?? Lack of a clearly defined role and scope in some individual institutions and agencies
- ?? Convincing Arkansans of reasons for investing in an improved workforce
- ?? Confidentiality regulations of certain agencies which creates barriers to service

The major goals of the Arkansas workforce investment system identified by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board are as follows:

- ?? Prepare the state's unemployed and underemployed for rewarding, well-paying jobs
- ?? Create an integrated system that upgrades skills of existing employees
- ?? Support the workforce training needs of employers, including facilitating communication with training providers
- ?? Define clearly the role of each segment of the educational system and coordinate these segments
- ?? Eliminate duplication among new and existing programs and providers
- ?? Improve and expand the system of cooperative projects and over-all effort between employers and schools
- ?? Ensure that high school graduates have the basic skills needed for further education or work
- ?? Implement competency-based certification programs for instructors and students
- ?? Provide incentives through a skilled workforce for higher-paying business and industry to expand within the state and/or move into the state
- ?? Provide access to career planning and preparation services for all interested Arkansans
- ?? Offer labor market information that is current and accurate, including information about available jobs and the skills required for those jobs
- ?? Develop and implement a statewide management information system that simplifies intake, case management, data collection, and reporting, as well as allows for comparative analyses.

The entities included in the plan will contribute toward the state goals according to the individual requirements, goals, and scope of the particular programs. Required One-Stop partners will meaningfully participate in the One-Stop career development system in a manner consistent with and appropriate to the particular entities. Detailed descriptions of the contributions of specific programs to achieving the goals included in the Arkansas State Unified Plan are provided in Part II-A(3-44).

B. ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

The establishment of a One-Stop delivery system for workforce development services is a cornerstone of the reforms contained in Title I of the Workforce Investment Act. This system will provide customers a single point of contact for employment, training, education, and supportive services. Under the oversight of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, One-Stop centers in communities throughout the state will integrate multiple workforce development programs and resources and make them available to individuals at the "street level" through a user-friendly delivery system. This system will simplify and expand access to services for job seekers and employers, eliminating the need to visit different locations.

A significant key to the success of the Arkansas One-Stop System will be its "no wrong door" approach to providing services that encompass the principles of universal access, integration, collocation, collaboration and performance as the building blocks to the system. With the "no wrong door" philosophy, when a customer approaches any One-Stop partner requesting assistance with employment and training needs or services in support of employment and training, the customer will be electronically referred to all other One-Stop partners.

It is the policy of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board that no local mandatory One-Stop partner may opt out of participation in the One-Stop system. Furthermore, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board expects all local One-Stop partners to participate meaningfully in the One-Stop system. Mandatory One-Stop partners include:

- ?? Programs authorized under title I of WIA, serving:
 - Adults
 - Dislocated workers
 - Youth
- ?? Job Corps
- ?? Native American programs
- ?? Migrant and seasonal farm worker programs
- ?? Veterans' workforce programs
- ?? Programs authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act
- ?? Adult education and literacy activities authorized under title II of WIA
- ?? Vocational rehabilitation programs authorized under the Rehabilitation Act
- ?? Welfare-to-work programs authorized under f the Social Security Act
- ?? Senior community service employment activities authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965
- ?? Postsecondary vocational education activities under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act
- ?? Trade Adjustment Assistance and NAFTA Transitional Adjustment Assistance activities

- ?? Local veterans employment representatives and disabled veterans outreach programs
- ?? Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant
- ?? Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ?? Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws

Other entities allowed by the Workforce Investment Act that are approved by the local workforce investment board and the chief elected official(s) may also participate in the system.

All mandatory One-Stop partners must:

- ?? Make available to participants through the One-Stop delivery system the core services that are applicable to the partner's programs (Core services are detailed in the federal act and the Regulations)
- ?? Use a portion of funds made available to the partner's program, to the extent consistent with the Federal law authorizing the partner's program, to —
 - Create and maintain the One-Stop delivery system
 - Provide core services
- ?? Enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Local Board relating to the operation of the One-Stop system that includes a description of services, how the cost of the identified services and operating costs of the system will be funded, and methods for referrals
- ?? Participate in the operation of the One-Stop system consistent with the terms of the MOU and requirements of authorizing laws
- ?? Serve as a representative on the local workforce investment board

Memoranda of understanding (MOUs) will be developed and executed between the local board, with the agreement of the chief elected official(s), and the One-Stop partners relating to the operation of the One-Stop delivery system and in accordance with regulations in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Each of the ten Arkansas local workforce investment areas will develop a One-Stop delivery system in accordance with the regulations of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and criteria set by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board. In each local area there will be at least one comprehensive One-Stop center that:

- ?? Provides core services described in the Workforce Investment Act applicable to each One-Stop partner
- ?? Provides basic labor exchange services traditionally provided in the local area under the Wagner-Peyser program
- ?? Provides access to intensive services and training services described in the Workforce Investment Act
- ?? Serves as the point of access to individual training accounts

?? Provides access to discretionary One-Stop activities, supportive services, and needs-related payments

?? Provides access to other programs and activities carried out by mandatory One-Stop partners

A local area may have more than one comprehensive center. In addition, there may be auxiliary centers that supplement the comprehensive center.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will establish the policies and procedures that local workforce investment boards will use to certify the One-Stop operators. Local boards will select and certify One-Stop operators in accordance with these criteria. The One-Stop operator may be selected by the local board through a competitive process, or the local board may designate a consortium that includes three or more required One-Stop partners as an operator. The local board itself may serve as a One-Stop operator only with the consent of the chief elected official and the Governor.

The One-Stop operators are responsible for administering the One-Stop centers. Their role may range from simply coordinating service providers in the center to being the primary provider of services at the center. The role of the One-Stop operator is determined by the local board. In areas where there is more than one comprehensive One-Stop center, there may be separate operators for each center or one operator for multiple centers.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will issue criteria for the development and certification of One-Stop delivery systems. The designs of the local areas' One-Stop systems, consistent with these criteria, must be described in the local plans. The plan must include the number of comprehensive centers, the supplementary arrangements, and copies of the memoranda of understanding executed with the One-Stop partners.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will monitor the development of each One-Stop system. After the development, the Board will certify each system to ensure that it is in accordance with established criteria and the local area's plan.

The Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999 charges the state Workforce Investment Board with the responsibility of advising and assisting the Governor and the Arkansas General Assembly in the development and continuous improvement of a statewide system of activities that are funded under this Act or carried out through a one-stop delivery system. This includes the development of linkages in order to assure coordination and nonduplication among the programs and activities assisting the Governor and the General Assembly in the evaluation of the entire Arkansas workforce investment system including the One-Stop system.

Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999 addresses the directive for state agencies to work together to implement the workforce investment plan. The Executive Committee of the state board will recommend to the Governor the resolution of any disagreements between or among state agencies pertaining to their duties and responsibilities in the state workforce investment plan and recommend to the Governor that he require state agencies to cooperate with the board in implementing the state workforce investment plan. The state board will promulgate any rules or regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of the Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999 and the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999 requires that each local board submit a plan that includes a description of the One-Stop delivery system to be established or designated in the local area. This plan must include a description of how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that the providers meet the employment needs of local employers and participants. The plan must also include a copy of each memorandum of understanding concerning the operation of the One-Stop delivery system in the local area.

C. PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Methods for joint planning and coordination of programs and activities are included in the Arkansas State Unified Plan. During the 1997 session of the Arkansas General Assembly, Governor Mike Huckabee and the members of the General Assembly recognized the need to upgrade the Arkansas workforce. To meet this challenge, the Vocational and Technical Education Division and the State Board of Vocational Education were abolished, and the Department of Workforce Education and the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities were created by Arkansas Act 803 of 1997. The Workforce Development Commission was also created by this legislation.

The Workforce Development Commission was composed of representatives from a wide variety of business, education, and government leaders. Among their purposes was the development of a state plan for better delivery of technical education and training in needed skills, to include maximizing the effectiveness of postsecondary vocational education. Portions of this plan have been included in the Arkansas State Unified Plan. Other portions may be included as the State Unified Plan is evaluated and modified each year.

Governor Mike Huckabee established the Arkansas Career Opportunities Partnership Cabinet (COPC) to govern the state's full-service employment, career development, and training systems before the development of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board. Members of this cabinet were the state directors of the Department of Workforce Education, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Information Services, the

Department of Health, the Economic Development Commission, the Employment Security Department, and the Department of Education. Recommendations of this Cabinet have been incorporated into the State Unified Plan.

Interested entities from all parts of the State of Arkansas have formed workgroups to make recommendations concerning various parts of this plan. These recommendations have been taken into account when developing the Arkansas State Unified Plan.

With direction and guidance from the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, Arkansas began developing its State Unified Plan on October 6, 1999, the day guidance for the plan was published in the Federal Register. On this day, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board staff met with representatives of all state agencies that would be involved in developing the plan to discuss the planning guidance and begin the planning process. Both the board and public representatives provided strong representation from business and labor. The staff of the Workforce Investment Board met with representatives of these agencies again on November 19 to establish procedures and a time line for submitting contributions to the plan. Preliminary draft contributions to the plan were submitted to the Workforce Investment Board by December 15, and these contributions were combined to create a preliminary draft of the plan.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board met January 11, 2000, for a full-day workshop to discuss the State Unified Plan and provide policy guidance and direction for the 13 elements of the plan. The general public was also invited to provide suggestions. The results of this workshop were included in the preliminary draft of the plan. The preliminary draft was transmitted on diskette and by e-mail to all members of the state board on January 14, and the board returned their comments and suggestions to the Workforce Investment Board staff. These comments and suggestions were instrumental in improving the plan. The full state board met January 26 to consider changes that had been made. Additional suggestions were made. These suggestions were incorporated into the plan, and the Executive Summary and the first draft of Arkansas' State Unified Plan were presented to the Executive Committee on February 8. At this time, the Executive Committee approved the publishing of the Executive Summary and the first draft of the plan available for public comment.

Additional policies and procedures were added by the Executive Committee at their March 21 meeting, after recommendations were made by the other committees of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, the Board staff, the Department of Labor, and local boards. Specific detailed information ensuring that planning and coordination of the State Unified Plan includes Perkins III, WIA Title I Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker, Adult Education and Literacy, Food Stamp Employment and Training, Trade Act, Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation (ARS and DSB), Veterans, Unemployment Insurance, TANF, Welfare-to-Work, SCSEP, and Community Services Block Grant programs can be found in Part II-C(2-15).

In addition to information provided under C (1) of the State Unified Plan, the following steps were taken to provide opportunity for public comment and participation:

- ?? A legal notice ran in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, a newspaper of statewide circulation, on February 9, 2000. The ad announced the availability of a copy of the first draft of the state plan for public viewing from February 9 through March 10.
- ?? The notice also identified a Web address through which the draft could be viewed.
- ?? Advertisements in four regional newspapers and business publications announced that the Workforce Investment Board would hold at least one public hearing on the workforce development system of the state, including the draft plan.
- ?? Press releases were issued for public hearings, and copies of the releases were sent to persons registered for notification under the State's Administrative Procedures Act.

Lists of comments submitted through the public review/hearing process and Board responses have been included with the final State Unified Plan sent to the U. S. Department of Labor March 29, 2000. Each participating entity held public review of their individual plans as required by the separate programs. Content from the individual plans is included in the State Unified Plan.

Section C (1) of the plan provides basic information relative to planning sessions held with representatives of appropriate agencies and groups involved in plan development. By December 15, 1999, agency representatives submitted script for their respective sections of the plan. This script reflected content in the individual state plans. Thereafter the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) staff held frequent meetings with agency staffs in finalizing the unified plan.

The Governor's liaison had frequent dialogue with the AWIB staff, conveying the Governor's input. The State WIB chair had separate communication with the Governor. The State WIB was significantly involved as indicated under C (1) of the plan. Local chief elected officials were involved in various ways including an interchange of ideas as the AWIB staff met with each of the ten local boards in January/February 2000. In addition, the Executive Director met with county judges on February 2-3 to receive input.

The business community and labor organizations as well as other entities (education, etc.) were represented through the State Board and local workforce investment boards and through participation as public representatives in the State Board meetings. In addition, the president and CEO of the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries of Arkansas spoke at the State WIB meeting of October 12, 1999, and provided recommendations from the business community.

D. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Educational and job-training needs of individuals are specifically address in Arkansas' State Unified Plan. In order to have a globally recognized workforce in Arkansas, there is a need for a better-educated workforce. Within this broad category, the greatest need is for workers with a sound basic education. Over 20 percent of Arkansans have difficulty with the reading, writing, and computational skills considered necessary for functioning in everyday life. In addition, a significant number of Arkansas' high school graduates require extensive remediation after they enter post-secondary education. Research by the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce concluded that products of Arkansas' Kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) education system generally do not have basic skills to be trainable by industry. Low educational skill levels are directly tied to low incomes.

Because of a change in the economy to a technology/information service base, there is a need for more individuals who have education beyond high school and who have increased occupational skills. Many individuals also need increased employability skills, including an increased work ethic.

The subgroup that especially needs increased educational and occupational skill levels and an increased work ethic are low-income, educationally disadvantaged adults, including single parents, displaced homemakers, and food-stamp recipients. They also need job placement assistance, role models, mentoring, and supportive services that assist with obtaining employment and education and training.

A number of the state's citizens may be classified as the "working poor." They struggle to survive on an income at or below poverty level. Case management and needs assessment of individuals who received federal funding through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) indicate that a number of those applicants tested at or below the eighth grade level in reading and math skills. Recent Welfare-to-Work legislation introduced another client group into the mix: Harder to serve welfare recipients are, for the most part, less educated, less skilled, and less trained and therefore less capable of competing for jobs in the work place which will ultimately lead to economic self-sufficiency and personal responsibility.

Individuals with disabilities often need assistance in moving through the One-Stop process. They need counseling, including diagnosis, evaluation, and follow-up. They need education and training that will lead to appropriate employment, job placement and referral to appropriate positions, and supportive services that assist with obtaining employment and education/training.

Individuals with multiple barriers to educational enhancement, including individuals with limited English proficiency, also often need assistance in moving through the training process. Many in

this subgroup need adult education and literacy programs including citizenship classes. Many need occupational skill training, especially short-term training that leads to immediate jobs.

Criminal offenders in correctional institutions and other institutionalized individuals need counseling, including diagnosis, evaluation, and follow-up. They also need education and training that will lead to appropriate employment, including on-the-job training while institutionalized

All programs included in the State Unified Plan require needs assessments. The responsible state agencies have fulfilled these assessment responsibilities to adequately assess the service requirements of the groups served by their programs. There are currently many programs designed to meet the employment and training needs of Arkansans. Through the One-Stop delivery system, the entities providing these services can collaborate to maximize the use of their funds and better meet the needs of the people of Arkansas. Sharing this assessment data is creating a framework for the coordination and integration of the services that will be provided through the One-Stop delivery system.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and establish policy for conducting all employment and training activities within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers. The activities of partners and their programs and activities in assessing the educational and job-training needs of individuals can be found in Part II-D(2-42).

Key Economic Trends

Based on data from the University of Little Rock Institute for Economic Advancement, Woods and Poole Economics, US Market Trends and Forecasts, the Arkansas Employment Security Department, and the U. S. Industry and Trade Outlook, the following trends affecting the economic environment of Arkansas for the next five years have been identified.:

- ?? Economic growth, albeit slightly slower, will continue as the nation's record postwar economic boom in the foreseeable future. Unemployment rates will hold steady around 4.5 percent, as labor force rates and population growth will be in the 1.5 – 2 percent range over the next few years. State economic growth will depend upon continued national growth and exports, especially in Asia.
- ?? Manufacturing jobs as a percentage of total employment will continue to decline slightly as services, particularly business and health, will grow.

- ?? During the past five years, manufacturing industries experiencing the largest decline in Arkansas include apparel, leather, electronics, and industrial machinery. Global competition and advanced technological processes will continue to result in job declines.
- ?? Textiles, furniture and transportation equipment have experienced growth. Other industries such as food and kindred products, lumber, paper, and metals have solidified into mature, slow-growth industries.

Technology will shape the future of employment:

- ?? Biotechnology will affect food and forest products, especially seed, rice, poultry, and timber. Growth in other industries such as food and kindred products will most likely occur if niche products such as nutraceuticals are developed. Science will also affect chemicals and allied products as cosmeuticals, pharmaceuticals, and diagnostic substances are developed.
- ?? Technology will affect production methods in textiles, electronics, communications devices, energy sources, printing, holography, desk top publishing, glass, stone and clay ceramics, fiber optics, metals, and instruments, especially health care.
- ?? Growth in business and health services will spur demand for professionals in these fields and in industries servicing them such as health care products, pharmaceuticals, electronics, and furniture.
- ?? Information technology will continue to grow as computers and the Internet flourish. Job growth will be particularly heavy for programmers, analysts, and technicians.
- ?? The transportation sector will grow considerably as evidenced by the increase in truck drivers.

In addition to these trends, the National Alliance of Business (1996) expects the workforce of 2005 to be older, more balanced by gender, and having more minority representation. Arkansas can be expected to follow this trend.

E. STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Organizations and Structure

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and establish policy for conducting all employment and training activities within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999 (Attachment E-1), including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers. On September 30, 1999, in accordance with Section 8 of the Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999 and Section

116(a) of the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 Governor Mike Huckabee designated local workforce investment areas within the state through consultation with the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and after consultation with chief elected officials and after consideration of comments received through the public comment process, as described in the federal Workforce Investment Act, Section 112(b)(9). The Governor proclaimed the following 10 local areas to be Arkansas Workforce Investment Areas:

| AREA | COMPRISING COUNTIES |
|---------------|--|
| Northwest | Benton, Carroll, Boone, Marion, Baxter, Washington, Madison, Newton, Searcy |
| North Central | Fulton, Izard, Sharp, Stone, Independence, Jackson, Van Buren, Cleburne, White, Woodruff |
| Northeast | Randolph, Clay, Lawrence, Greene, Craighead, Poinsett, Mississippi |
| Southeast | Grant, Jefferson, Arkansas, Cleveland, Lincoln, Desha, Drew, Bradley, Ashley, Chicot |
| Southwest | Sevier, Howard, Hempstead, Nevada, Dallas, Little River, Miller, Ouachita, Calhoun, Lafayette, Columbia, Union |
| West Central | Johnson, Pope, Conway, Yell, Perry, Montgomery, Garland, Hot Spring, Pike, Clark |
| Western | Crawford, Franklin, Logan, Sebastian, Scott, Polk |
| Central | Faulkner, Saline, Pulaski (except City of Little Rock), Lonoke, Prairie, Monroe |
| Eastern | Cross, Crittenden, St. Francis, Lee, Phillips |
| Little Rock | City of Little Rock |

These workforce investment areas are identical to the JTPA service delivery areas that were configured in 1982 based on common geographic and economic factors. In each of the areas, the chief elected officials submitted requests in writing for designation as workforce investment areas. Proposed geographic area designations were on public review from August 29, 1999, to September 28, 1999, and a public hearing was held on September 28.

The City of Little Rock was designated as a workforce investment area for a period of less than two years. The other nine areas were designated workforce investment areas for a period of two years. The process used for designation of the areas included CEOs having applied for designation, CEOs attending training in June, 1999 and again in September, 1999, sustained fiscal integrity, passed PY 97 performance standards, and passed PY 96 performance standards.

Section 9(c) of Act 1125 of 1999 sets statutory guidelines for appointing members of local boards. In addition, the criteria to be used by chief elected officials in selection of local

workforce investment board appointments was approved September 28, 1999, by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board for recommendation to the Governor and were issued by the Governor on September 30 and distributed to each area. The criteria further expand and define the requirements of Act 1125 of 1999 and were available for public review from August 29, 1999, to September 28, 1999.

On December 15, 1999, the state board added the additional requirement that a school superintendent be included on each local board. On January 26, 2000, the state board added the requirement that at least one member of each local board represent a two-year institution – community college, technical institute, or technical college.

Appointments to the initial local workforce investment boards by the chief elected officials were approved by the state workforce investment board for recommendation to the Governor and certified by the Governor on January 14. Act 1125 of 1999 states that once every two years the Governor will certify one local board for each local area in the state. Composition of local boards may change between periods of certification.

After a memorandum of understanding is entered into between a designated organization and a local board, that organization becomes a One-Stop partner and receives representation on the local board. The One-Stop partner determines its board representative. The representative need not live within the workforce investment area, but it is expected that they will work there and will be the optimum representative of the partner in that area. It is the partner representative that is on the board and not the person. If the person no longer represents the partner, the partner shall name a new representative. If a memorandum of understanding is dissolved, that partner loses representation on the board.

Boards must maintain a majority as business representatives, and the chair and vice-chair must come from this group, and all board changes must maintain statutory categories and must be reported to the state workforce investment board.

As a subgroup within each local board, a youth council will be appointed by the local board, in cooperation with the chief elected official for the local area. In order to operate as a fully active subgroup of the local board, the youth council will include in its active membership the following:

- ?? Members of the local board with special interest or expertise in youth policy
- ?? Representatives of youth service agencies, including juvenile justice and local law enforcement agencies
- ?? Representatives of local public housing authorities
- ?? Parents of eligible youth seeking assistance under the Workforce Investment Act

- ?? Individuals, including former participants, and representatives of organizations, that have experience relating to youth activities
- ?? Representatives of the Job Corps, if a Job Corps Center is located in the area

The membership of each youth council may include other individuals as the chairperson of the local board, in cooperation with the chief elected official, determines appropriate. Members of the youth council who are not members of the local board will be voting members of the youth council and nonvoting members of the board.

The State Youth Council Workgroup recommends that the local workforce investment board or chief elected official send letters to agencies, entities or organizations with special interest in youth requesting names and qualifications of individuals they consider to meet the above criteria to be considered as members of the youth council. Other interested parties who have expertise in youth policy may obtain information from the workforce investment board or chief elected official.

Section 11(n) of Act 1125 of 1999 gives the guidelines for conflict of interest for any local board member. A member of a local board may not vote on a matter under consideration by the local board regarding the provision of services by the member or by an entity that such member represents or that would provide direct financial benefit to the member or the immediate family of the member. In addition, a member of a local board may not engage in any other activity determined by the Governor or by law to constitute a conflict of interest as specified in this plan.

The procedures the local boards will use to identify eligible providers of training services for the adult and dislocated worker programs are being developed.

For youth services providers, each local workforce investment board may solicit providers by contacting those contractors with whom they have previously done business and through a local request-for-proposal (RFP) process. Recommendations by the local youth council should be followed. The local WIB will approve grants based on performance and program costs, with standards determined by the State WIB and local workforce investment boards. The state board is currently gathering information regarding performance indicators. Additional criteria for awarding grants for youth activities have been developed by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board (see Attachment E-5, Arkansas State Unified Plan).

Local workforce investment boards will follow standard competitive procurement procedures in awarding grants and contracts for activities under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. These procedures must be addressed in local plan. Requests for proposals must be issued and the availability of grants and contracts must be advertised in area media outlets.

Local boards will approve grants based on performance and program cost data provided by potential grantees. Additional guidance has been given by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board. (See Attachment E-6, Arkansas State Unified Plan). The state and local workforce investment boards will gather information regarding performance indicators and will use this information in evaluating the continuous improvement of the grantees and the future awarding of grants and contracts.

Although each local workforce investment board may solicit providers by contacting those contractors with whom they have previously done business, Requests-for-Proposal (RFPs) must be issued. Availability of grants and contracts must be advertised in area media outlets. For Youth contracts, the recommendations by the local Youth Council should be followed. The local workforce investment boards will approve grants based on performance and program costs. Additional information regarding state-imposed requirements, appeals process, criteria for appointment of local board and youth council members, conflict of interest issues, procedures for identifying eligible providers, management of locally operated Individual Training Account (ITA) systems, as well as specific partner program and activity details can be found in the Arkansas State Unified Plan, Part II-E(4-21); Attachments E-2, E-3, and E-4).

F. FUNDING

Allocation Criteria

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and establish policy for conducting all employment and training activities conducted within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Act, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers. The criteria for funding the programs included in this plan will be consistent with the federal and state laws governing those programs and are described in detail in the program sections under Part II-F(3-44) and Attachments F(1-5), Arkansas State Unified Plan.

The chief elected official or lead elected official in a local workforce investment area will serve as the local grant recipient for, and shall be liable for any misuse of, the grant funds allocated to the local area for youth, adult, and dislocated worker activities under Sections 128, 129, 133, and 134 of the Workforce Investment Act.

In a case in which a local workforce investment area includes more than one unit of general local government, the chief elected officials of such units will execute an agreement that specifies the respective roles of the individual chief elected officials, including responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the allocated funds. If, after a reasonable effort, the chief elected officials are

unable to reach agreement about this responsibility, the Governor make the determination. The local plan must include the agreement concerning this responsibility.

In order to assist in the disbursement of the grant funds, the chief elected official or lead elected official of a local workforce investment area may designate an entity to serve as a local grant subrecipient for such funds or as a local fiscal agent. Such designation will not relieve the chief elected official or lead elected official of the liability for any misuse of grant funds.

The local grant recipient or subrecipient will disburse such funds for workforce investment activities at the direction of the local board. The local grant recipient or subrecipient will disburse the funds immediately on receiving such direction from the local board.

The local board, in partnership with the chief elected official(s), will conduct oversight with respect to local programs of youth activities authorized under WIA Section 129, local employment and training activities authorized under WIA Section 134, and the One-Stop delivery system in the local area.

It is the policy of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board that no local mandatory One-Stop partner may opt out of participation in the One-Stop system. Furthermore, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board expects all local One-Stop partners to meaningfully participate in the One-Stop system, including financial support of the One-Stop center at a level proportionate to the partner's participation.

Local workforce investment boards and One-Stop center operators will be encouraged to include non-mandatory programs and service providers as partners in the One-Stop system. These non-mandatory partners will include agencies that serve customer groups with barriers to employment. Non-mandatory partners will also include private, for-profit enterprises in the employment and training field. These non-mandatory partners will share the responsibility of One-Stop administrative costs. This is intended to bring a broader array of needed services to the One-Stop system and provide a broader funding base for One-Stop operations.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board met January 11, 2000, to discuss the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and to solicit recommendations from the public for improving the workforce investment system. Recommendations regarding the criteria for allocating funds were included in the discussion. The Board's recommendations on funding are:

- ?? Local workforce investment boards will be responsible for the administration of funds allocated to the workforce investment areas for conducting the local youth, adult, and dislocated worker described in WIA Sections 129 and 134. Local boards must describe in local plans how funds will be administered and how the activities described in WIA Sections 129 and 134 will be conducted with those funds.

- ?? Local plans must be approved by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board.
- ?? In providing services to youth, adults, and dislocated workers, local workforce investment boards must ensure full and meaningful participation in the local One-Stop center by program operators, including adequate financial support of the center.
- ?? Local boards must ensure that the needs of special population groups are met.
- ?? Local boards must ensure that providers collect data for reporting on performance.
- ?? Innovation and collaboration are to be encouraged, and duplication of services must be eliminated.
- ?? The needs of employers must be assessed and action plans to meet these needs must be developed.
- ?? The One-Stop centers must be aggressively marketed to employers and job seekers by all One-Stop partners.
- ?? Lifelong learning must be encouraged, and workers must be encouraged to train for jobs in industries.
- ?? Partnerships between the private enterprise and the two-year colleges must be encouraged, and the K-12 education must improve.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board has chosen to distribute the WIA Title I youth and adult funds the first year using the standard federal formula and has chosen to adopt the hold harmless clause for the first year. This hold-harmless provision was approved by the state board on December 15, 1999, and will apply to the first year only (July 1, 2000-June 30, 2001). Dislocated worker funds will be distributed by placing the following weights on these six factors: 5 percent insured unemployment, 15 percent unemployment concentrations, 30 percent plant closings and mass layoffs, 15 percent declining industries, 5 percent farmer-rancher economic hardship, and 30 percent long-term unemployment. A decision about applying the hold-harmless provision for the second year of funding will be made before the beginning of the next program year with input from local boards and local elected officials. Further detailed information regarding the in-state allotment of funds to local workforce investment areas for Title I youth , adult, and dislocated workers can be found in the Arkansas State Unified Plan, Part II-F(11-13).

G. ACTIVITIES TO BE FUNDED

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and approve all employment and training activities conducted within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, the Arkansas Workforce

Investment Act, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers.

Section 181(e) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) states that no funds available under WIA Title I shall be used for economic development activities, capitalization of businesses, and similar activities that are not directly related to training for eligible individuals under WIA Title I.

WIA Section 129(c)(6)(B) states that none of the funds made available under the Workforce Investment Act may be used to provide funding to carry out, through programs funded under the WIA, activities that were funded under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, unless the programs funded under the WIA serve only those participants eligible to participate in the programs under the WIA.

A general overview of the activities funded through the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and a description of how each participating entity will use the funds received under their respective programs for employment and training can be found in Part II-G (1-44).

H. COORDINATION AND NON-DUPLICATION

Services Provided Through Programs Identified in Unified Plan

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will be responsible for coordinating and integrating the services identified in this plan. The membership of this Board includes the directors of the state agencies responsible for these programs, and with guidance and oversight provided by the full board, these directors will work together to ensure that programs and services are provided with minimum duplication and with increasing efficiency.

A primary vehicle for coordinating these programs and services is the Arkansas State Unified Plan. The design of State Unified Plan presents the essential elements of the state's employment and training programs in a single comprehensive document that will enable the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board to analyze these programs by comparing and contrasting those essential elements. Where duplication of services or the need for greater coordination is discovered, the board will work with the state agency directors to eliminate these problems.

The design of the local service delivery system will also provide practical opportunities to discover duplication and the need for collaboration between agencies and programs. With all program and service providers operating through the One-Stop service delivery system, local workforce investment boards will be able to observe the activities in the local service centers and discover areas for improving the delivery of services. The state board will direct the local boards

to bring these opportunities to improve services to the attention of the agency directors responsible for the programs that are involved and to inform the state board, as well. Local boards will be directed to offer suggestions for eliminating duplication and improving services, and the best solutions will be adopted throughout the state.

Coordination between One-Stop partners will contribute to meeting the needs of the customer without duplication of services. Partner meetings should be held regularly to inform all partners about the goals and programs of each partner, to discuss common challenges, and to make recommendations to the board for improvement of the workforce investment system. As partners learn more about other programs, they become more adept at coordinating and integrating services. This opening of lines of communication, combined with a common application, intake, and tracking system, solidifies the “no wrong door” concept.

In accordance with Section 11(g) of Act 1125 of 1999, each local workforce investment board, in partnership with the chief elected official, will conduct oversight with respect to local programs of youth activities, local adult employment and training, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area. Section 11(j) of Act 1125 of 1999 states that each local board shall coordinate the workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with economic development strategies and develop other employer linkages with the activities. Each local board should be proactive in avoiding duplication and improving operational collaboration of the workforce investment activities among programs in the local area.

Services provided by each of the One-Stop partners will be coordinated and made available through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between local boards and One-Stop partners. Training sessions will be scheduled from time to time to ensure that each partner is aware of the responsibilities of other programs and the scope of services and activities available. The memoranda of understanding will set program responsibilities incorporating any joint activities or coordinated policies. The MOU will also help create a system to avoid duplication services while providing assistance to all customers. Non-discrimination requirements and assurance of universal access will be a part of every MOU.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will establish standards for local MOUs (see Attachment B-3 of the Arkansas State Unified Plan for specific details). Each local board will develop and enter into a memorandum of understanding with the one-stop partners in compliance with Section 121(c) of the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998. A copy of each memorandum of understanding must be included in the local plan.

As part of the memorandum of understanding, partners in each One-Stop will complete an initial local integration plan. The local integration plan will describe local workforce development needs and service delivery strategies for each workforce investment area. Each plan should

include a services menu, which outlines the services that are available to customers and designates which partner is responsible for providing each service and for ensuring consistent, high quality service delivery. As additional partners and services are added, the menu must be revised to include a complete service provider list. This services menu will be a vehicle for ensuring collaboration and non-duplication of effort among partners.

To ensure coordination and avoid duplication of services, each One-Stop system will use a common application, intake, and tracking system. These systems will be developed with the coordination and approval of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board.

The state board may recommend coordination of policies and mergers. Section 6(a)(10) of Act 1125 of 1999 charges the state board with the responsibility of recommending the programs identified in Section 7(b)(8)(A) of the Act which may be consolidated or realigned.

It is the responsibility of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, whose members include directors of 6 state departments/programs as well as representative members of state legislature, to eliminate state-level barriers to coordination among One-Stop partners.

A major barrier to coordination is the issue of confidentiality. This barrier is eliminated by using a common intake and case management system, which allows the customer to release relevant information to partners who can best provide services. The privacy of the customer is insured through confidentiality agreements among the staff who are authorized to have access to this information.

I. SPECIAL POPULATIONS AND OTHER GROUPS

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board is committed to universal access to appropriate services for all Arkansans. The Arkansas State Unified Plan has designed strategies to target and serve special population and to ensure universal access. The staff of the State Board will ensure that each One-Stop meets the requirements for equitable universal access to services under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. While there are no eligibility requirements for individuals or businesses to receive core services, intensive and training services may be provided only to individuals who have not been able to obtain appropriate employment after receiving core services (and for training, after receiving intensive services). Local workforce investment boards (WIBs) are required to develop plans on how they will prioritize service recipients, if there is not sufficient funding to serve everyone. The plans will be in accordance with federal regulations. Details concerning services to specific populations are given in the Arkansas State Unified Plan, Part II-I(b)(11-15).

All employment and training activities conducted within the workforce investment system will be coordinated and approved by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board. Universal access is key to the success of the one-stop career development system. Some individuals have special needs in order to have this access. Special needs of the following populations will be served in several ways.

Members of groups with special needs will be provided the full array of services provided at a One-Stop. Many of these individuals will need assistance in moving through the one-stop process. Some will need special assessment. Others will need counseling and intensive services from staff who understand their special needs. These services will be provided and/or coordinated by appropriate partners.

Through the workforce investment system, employment and training services will be provided to meet the needs of the identified special population groups, as well as to other populations through universal access. Local workforce investment boards, under the guidance of the state board, will determine priorities for the use in funds. In accordance with WIA Section 134(d)(4)(E), priority for adult intensive services and training services will be extended to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals in the local area. Procedures for administering this priority are being developed by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board.

Methods of collecting data and reporting progress are detailed in the Arkansas State Unified Plan, Parts K and L.

Entities administering Perkins III, Tech-Prep, Adult Education and Family Literacy, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs describe the steps that will be taken to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, projects or activities carried out with the respective funds (see Part II-I(5-31 for specific details). This is in accordance with Section 427(b) of the General Education Provisions Act.

J. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board is developing a program for development of personnel to achieve the performance indicators listed in this plan. On January 11, 2000, the Board met and discussed the methods for professional development and system change. Recommendations and suggestions were received by the Board at that time. Currently, staff of the State Board provides technical assistance to local workforce investment boards, One-Stop operators, and One-Stop partners as needed. Staff will monitor One-Stops as they develop and will determine where there is additional need for technical assistance, personnel development, and system improvement. In addition, workshops and training sessions will be held as needed. Part of the state set-aside funds will be used for providing this assistance.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and establish policy for conducting all employment and training activities within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers. The local and State workforce investment boards will use core and state-required measure indicators to judge the performance of each measured group in WIA Title I. Problem areas will be identified and corrective measures prescribed. In addition, each One-Stop will be monitored closely as it develops in order to reinforce the strategic direction and to ensure that the system is in place for continuous improvement.

A general overview of professional development and system improvement for the programs in the Arkansas State Unified Plan and staff development and specific inservice training opportunities for programs and activities are detailed in Part II-J(1-11). Staff development and inservice training topics include changing technology, career guidance and planning, integration of academic and vocational education, and use of content standards, etc. Training will be conducted through classes, seminars, conferences, distance learning, team training, and cooperative relationships, among other methods, and will utilize performance evaluation techniques to continuously improve training processes. Technical assistance topics include, but are not limited to, design of new programs, redesign of existing programs to meet the needs of business/industry, instructional equipment, gender equity issues and strategies, and a variety of other topics.

K. PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and establish policy for conducting performance accountability activities associated with the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers.

At its January 11, 2000, meeting and workshop, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board provided the following recommendations on performance accountability:

- ?? Specific performance goals must be set, sanctions must be imposed if goals are not achieved, and good performance must be recognized.
- ?? Each one-stop delivery system should be evaluated for effectiveness, partner participation, and customer satisfaction.
- ?? The effectiveness of one-stop services must be evaluated on a short-term basis and a long-term basis.

?? Each agency's performance indicators and measurable goals should meet federal guidelines and benchmarks.

The local and state workforce investment boards will use core measure indicators calculated on a quarterly and program year basis to judge the performance of each measured group in WIA Title I. Problem areas will be identified and corrective measures prescribed.

In accordance with Section 136(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the following required performance indicators will be used:

The core indicators of performance for adults and for youth who are age 19-21 will include the following:

- ?? Entry into unsubsidized employment
- ?? Retention in unsubsidized employment 6 months after entry into the employment
- ?? Earning received in unsubsidized employment 6 months after entry into the employment
- ?? Attainment of a recognized credential relating to achievement of educational skills, which may include attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or occupational skills, by participants who are eligible youth age 19 through 21 who enter postsecondary education, advanced training, or unsubsidized employment

The core indicators of performance for youth who are age 14-18 will include the following:

- ?? Attainment of basic skills and, as appropriate, work readiness or occupational skills
- ?? Attainment of secondary school diplomas or their recognized equivalents
- ?? Placement and retention in post-secondary education or advanced training, or placement and retention in military service, unsubsidized employment, or qualified apprenticeships

In accordance with Section 136(b)(2)(B) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, a customer satisfaction performance indicator for participants and employers will be established, and customer satisfaction will be measured through surveys conducted after the conclusion of participation in workforce investment activities. The evaluation instrument for documenting the progress made by local areas and the specific numerical goals for these indicators are designated by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board (see Attachment K-1). The evaluation instrument will be consistent in every workforce investment area, and matrices will be identical for each area.

In accordance with Section 136(b)(2)(C) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the following additional categories of performance measures were adopted by the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board on December 14, 1999:

- ?? Demographics of all One-Stop participants
- ?? Cost per "Registered" and "registered" customer

- ?? Expansion of the employer customer base
- ?? Efforts to achieve a “livable wage”
- ?? Percentage of job openings filled by One-Stop customers

In accordance with Section 136 of the Workforce Investment Act, the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and the U.S. Department of Labor will negotiate and reach agreement on the state adjusted levels of performance for the core indicators of performance and customer satisfaction for the first three program years covered by this plan. These negotiations will be conducted and completed during the 90-day approval period between April 1 and June 30, 2000.

In accordance with Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, local levels of performance to be used to measure performance will be negotiated with the governor and chief elected officials. The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will negotiate with the local workforce investment boards and chief elected officials to reach agreement on local levels of performance based on the state adjusted levels of performance. These levels will be used by the local board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent, eligible providers, and the one-stop delivery system.

The negotiation process for performance levels will be conducted in accordance with instructions in U.S. Department of Labor Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGLs) Nos. 7-99 and 8-99, dated March 3, 2000. The Program and Performance Evaluation Committee, Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, developed preliminary performance levels for the first three program years for all 17 categories on March 13. These levels were approved by the Executive Committee on March 21 and are included in the Arkansas State Unified Plan as Attachment K-1.

L. DATA COLLECTION

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board requires all programs included in the Arkansas State Unified Plan to provide services, collect data, and report on those services across all programs. The Act also requires an integrated data reporting system that will measure the effectiveness of those programs they provide to maintain a productive workforce. With direction from the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and the agencies responsible for administering the programs in this plan, the Arkansas Department of Information Services (ADIS) is developing a data collection and reporting system to meet this requirement. The system will be known as ASCET, Arkansas Shared Component Engineering Technology, and the data collection capability will be fully tested and operational by October 1, 2000.

The ASCET project architecture began as a response to the WIA requirements. Under the direction of the Career Opportunities Partnership Cabinet, the shared architecture began as the ARIES Lab and sought a way to provide shared, integrated, accurate, one-stop data on individuals and their program participation. After evolving through three iterations of Enterprise

JavaBean technology and building proof of concept for the Welfare-to-Work (WtW) system, the ASCET technology has been adopted by ADIS engineering. ASCET will be used to integrate information across state agency systems, providing common information on individuals to allow agencies to access more accurate and timely information, updated whenever any agency using the architecture updates an individual's information.

The initial ASCET reporting system will integrate information across the programs administered by the Arkansas Employment Security Department (AESD): employment service (ES), unemployment insurance (US), WIA, and WtW. ASCET will enable Arkansas to report on all or each of these programs, and it will provide the basis for further sharing among state agencies as requirements develop to share information. The system effort is estimated based on the WIA report requirements and the experience with WtW. Specific report requirements will be gathered during requirements analysis, and the reporting requirements for the programs administered by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services will also be included.

System requirements must be baselined early in the development effort to stay on schedule. To help with constraint and to meet a stringent schedule, ADIS will develop the report formats as late in the development cycle as possible. The initial development effort will concentrate on developing reports required for the third quarter of 2001. This report will include data from the last three quarters of 2000 and the first quarter of 2001. The 2000 data will be loaded from existing systems and merged with data collected for 2001 by the new system. Business process improvements to take advantage of the shared technology architecture will be the subject of subsequent development efforts. Current planning would have the input system in place by July 1, 2000 with the reporting system in place prior to October 1, 2000.

General information about the data collection and reporting systems of the programs included in this plan and expanded information about selected programs can be found in Part II-L(2-7) of the Arkansas State Unified Plan.

M. CORRECTIVE ACTION

It is the intent of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board to be fully supportive of the local workforce investment system. To that end, the staff of the State Board and other monitoring entities will assist local boards in addressing problem areas, complying with legal and regulatory mandates, and earning incentive awards.

When corrective actions are needed, technical assistance, clarification, and reasonable opportunities for corrective action opportunities will be offered first. Corrective action must occur within 90 days of notification that such corrective action is needed. There may also be instances where a violation has not yet occurred, but the grantee will be notified of a potential for

problems so that corrective action may be taken on the recipient's own volition. Sanctions will be determined by the deliberateness, seriousness, and/or frequency of the violation. Failure to respond in good faith to corrective action or clarification requirements will lead to progressive sanction activity. The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board has developed a system of corrective action that is outlined in Attachment M-1, Arkansas State Unified Plan.

N. WAIVER AND WORK-FLEX REQUESTS

The State of Arkansas does not plan to request waivers as part of this State Unified Plan.

On March 21, 2000, the Executive Committee of the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board voted that a contracted administrative agent that is governed by a separate board from the local workforce investment board, is not required to obtain a waiver to provide non-training services. A waiver is required for the agent to provide training services. The Local Request for Waiver Procedure is included as Attachment N-1, Arkansas State Unified Plan. A request by an administrative agent to provide training services will require the same procedures as the waiver request for a board to provide such activities.

State Unified Plan

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